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ABSTRACT

This case study examined how student teachers made professional moral decisions and developed a professional moral ethos. Amanda, the student teacher, was working in a linguistically and culturally diverse kindergarten class which involved team teaching, teaching assistants, and parent and community participation. Data collection included participant interviews, classroom observations, and artifact collection to examine Amanda's thinking and decision making processes. Her ability to construct a functional role in the classroom was crucial to her professional moral activity and development. She was anxious over her role in the classroom's social organization and its relationship to the teacher's role. Her awareness of the social complexity of classroom dilemmas made her initially hesitant to assume a leadership role. She had to construct a leadership role and win the confidence of teachers. As she constructed a respected, predictable professional role, her actual and perceived range of choice was enlarged as she made more decisions about discipline, curriculum, and parent interaction. A constant theme was her inclination to preserve relationships, even at the expense of consistency or complete truthfulness. Another theme was the situated nature of problems she encountered in professional practice, which offered challenges and possibilities that influenced her moral activity. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

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Professional Moral Activity in Student Teaching:

Constructing an Ethos

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Professional Moral Activity in Student Teaching: Constructing an Ethos

Every profession has unique moral problems that demand creative solutions in everyday practice. Teachers are certainly no exception. While they face challenges in their efforts to become more effective teachers who further the learning and development of students, they are also faced with moral dilemmas and difficult decisions that have consequences for children, parents, and others in the community. Some educators even contend that teaching is a profession that is moral by nature (Chang, 1994; Tom, 1984).

The complex process of professional moral decision making in teaching may be difficult to uncover, because the process is not always conscious and overt. The influence of personal history and philosophy, social and moral maturity, and professional context may intertwine in ways that are difficult to unravel and examine. Despite the difficulties, the complex "real-life" realm of situational judgment and action is central to my research interests. The questions that I want to address are grounded in the conception of the teacher as a reflective practitioner, rather than a technician (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). I am most concerned with those decisions made in the "swampy lowlands" of professional practice by the people most knowledgeable of the problem situation, the practitioners themselves (Schon, 1983).

I began this research with two purposes. First, I wanted to find out how a novice teacher would perceive the moral landscape of teaching. Second, I wanted to know how a teacher would begin to make professional moral decisions and (possibly) develop a professional moral ethos. (For the purposes of this study, professional moral decisions are defined as professional decisions that have foreseeable consequences for other people, especially people to whom the teacher is professionally responsible.)

In addressing the questions I have chosen, I am also attempting to engage in a kind of research that Schon (1983) describes as "worthy," research that attempts to inform the theory building of knowledgeable professionals as they engage in a reflective practice. My aim is to reach beneath the surface rationalizations, philosophical ethics, and ideologies of our profession to the actual thinking and action of individuals in daily life. I want to understand the developing everyday ethos of a teacher as he or she struggles to meet the moral demands of the profession.

I will focus on the moral activity in the professional life of the participant. Dewey (1922) contends that as human beings we are active by nature and that through activity we adapt to a changing environment. Early in life we discover that our actions have consequences for others and that those others attribute

motives to our actions. These attributions constitute judgments that may cause us to consider our actions differently. Thus over time, we develop a sensitivity to the consequences that our actions have on others. In Dewey's view, activity leads to moral understanding and moral understanding influences future activity.

Therefore, based on Dewey's (1922) dialectical framework of moral development, my focus is the activity of the participant. However, at the same time, I am trying discover the participant's perception of his or her activity and its possible consequences for others. I am also looking for habits of operation that increase or decrease sensitivity to moral conditions.

Theoretical Framework

A study (Sirotnik, 1990) of over 500 senior education majors in 29 teacher preparation programs found that few were prepared to discuss the moral aspects of a teaching practice. On the other hand, Oser (1994) reported that experienced teachers were able to describe their moral activity and may have a characteristic procedural style for resolving moral conflicts. These studies taken together raise questions about how an inexperienced teacher would come to understand the moral landscape of teaching and how a professional ethos might develop in a novice teacher.

Moral activity in teaching has rarely been studied empirically. In the Handbook on Research in Teaching, Fenstermacher (1986) notes that "...research on teaching has not, to my knowledge, specifically addressed aspects of moral worth reflected in the teacher's actions..." (p. 40). In the latest edition of the Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, Strike (1996) advocates strongly for inclusion of ethics in teacher education programs, but articulates his position primarily from philosophical sources and research on the general moral education of children. Although helpful, there is no clear evidence that including ethical content in the teacher preparation curriculum affects the thinking or behaviors of teachers when they enter classrooms.

In fact, given Dewey's (1922) moral development framework and Piaget's (1965) research on the moral development of children, we would expect moral development to be a meaning-making process grounded in actual moral activity. In order to understand how teachers develop an understanding of the moral aspects of their professional lives, we probably need to consider more than their abstract knowledge of foundational issues or ethical codes. We need to understand their experience and the meaning that grows from experience.

Oser (1991, 1994) has developed a procedural approach to the study of professional morality in teaching that lends itself to the study of moral activity in classrooms. He suggests that the relation between justice reasoning and moral activity may be one in which justice reasoning is the dependent variable. In other words, the kind of interpersonal activity that is habitual for a person determines the kind of reasoning that person exercises in resolving a dilemma, rather than the other way around. This is consistent with Piaget's (1965) theory that moral reasoning develops in practical activity (in relationships) and can only be expressed at the verbal or symbolic level much later. Because this approach to moral development is situated in the practical activity of the individual, it considers both contextual and personal factors and is more open to empirical examination than models that focus on internal processes.

Oser (1991, 1994) conducted interviews with teachers in different types of schools and assigned to different age levels. Based on teachers' recollections of morally sensitive events, Oser concluded that teachers typically took one of five courses of action. Although Oser speculated that a teacher might not be perfectly consistent in adopting the same course of action every time, he or she would likely have a general ethos that was a typical response or habit. An ethos is not a stage of development, but a method of operation. As a method of operation, each ethos is functional for the person who uses it.

The first type of ethos in Oser's theory is "avoiding." In this type of response, the teacher knows that a problem exists, but attempts to ignore it rather than resolve it. The second type is "delegating." In this type of response, the teacher faces the problem but relinquishes the responsibility to someone else, usually a higher authority. A third type of ethos is "single-handed decision making" which involves unilateral action. The teacher does not provide justification to the interested parties, but as the "expert" settles the matter decisively. Single-handed decisions may or may not be considerate of all viewpoints and needs, because the teacher has not sought access to other viewpoints and the parties affected by the decision do not have access to the logic behind it.

A fourth type of ethos Oser describes as "Discourse I," or incomplete discourse. In this course of action, the teacher articulates the logic of the decision to all the parties involved, so that it can be correctly interpreted and acted upon. This approach allows access to the decision making process, but after the decision has been made. The last type of ethos is "Discourse II," or complete discourse. In this course of action, the teacher assumes that others are rational beings who are capable of balancing justice, care, and

truthfulness. He or she works to establish a forum where all viewpoints can be considered and decisions made jointly.

> Oser (1991) regards the Discourse II ethos to be preferable to the others. He states,
>
> Certainly, a "discourse II" teacher is not a saint, nor should he have to be. She or he need not be a person with extraordinary virtues. But s/he must create situations in which everybody uses his or her practical reason, balancing truthfulness, justice, and care. S/he must be someone who believes in the positive potential of children, who sees them as human beings with dignity and reason, and who presupposes, even in cases of severe conflict, that they are able to share their part (p. 225-226).

His preference for the "discourse II" ethos is based on the idea that open discourse promotes the moral development of both students and teachers by making alternative viewpoints and conflicting needs accessible to everyone's consideration. Therefore Oser's theory of professional moral development shares an essential aspect of Piaget's moral theory, that practical moral activity in the form of cooperative interactions with others promotes moral development and eventually results in more complex and autonomous moral judgment.

Understanding how new teachers view the professional moral landscape in which they operate, and how they begin to operate in it, is crucial to teacher education. If we want to prepare teachers who are both effective and responsible, we need to know how novice teachers grapple with the complexity of short-term and long-term consequences inherent in their teaching practices and become sensitized to the moral issues involved (Oser, Dick, & Patry, 1992). By looking at the procedures that are followed in interpersonal classroom activity, and examining the reflections and reasoning of novice teachers, it may be possible to observe and understand an interlude in the lifelong construction of a personal teaching ethos.

Methodology

My research questions focus on a developing process of moral activity in teaching rather than the logic or consistency of a teacher's decisions and actions. In order to understand a developing process, I needed access to the teacher's thoughts about his or her teaching experience at regular intervals throughout that experience. However, I also assumed that the social environment would be an integral part of the development process (Piaget, 1995; Dewey, 1922). Therefore, I needed to become familiar with the context

and spend time with the teacher there. I wanted to understand the context and observe the teacher operating in that context, while gaining regular access to his or her thinking, in order to gain an appreciation for what I believed would be an interactive developmental process, making sense of the moral aspects of teaching. In order to maintain this kind of intimacy with the participant and gain first-hand knowledge of the setting, I decided that a qualitative case study would be the best research design. A case study is an appropriate methodology when depth and detail are required for understanding an issue in context (Creswell, 1998).

Cases to be studied need to be selected on the basis of their ability to inform our understanding of a particular problem (Creswell, 1998). I selected a participant in her student teaching experience for several reasons. Student teachers' awareness of social context increases because they are in the same setting, working with the same children, five days a week. Student teachers are also taking part in school-wide activities, working with parents, going to parent association and faculty meetings, and otherwise involving themselves in the broader culture of a school and community, often for the first time. Student teachers are also beginning to see the long-term consequences of the professional decisions they make. In earlier field experiences, preservice teachers are sometimes "teaching and leaving." They often do not see what happens during the next lesson or the next week. They usually do not have to think about explaining their actions to parents. Because the student teaching experience usually leads to an increased understanding of the social aspects of teaching, it can also be a time when preservice teachers have to consider and/or reconsider the moral aspects of everyday teaching decisions.

In other words, students enter their student teaching as true novices in many ways that potentially affect professional moral activity and development. Although I assume that they have life experiences that have led them to construct some degree of moral understanding, their experiences in classrooms have been brief and/or limited in scope. The first year of teaching offers numerous challenges as well, but the weeks of student teaching are often a time when teaching philosophy crystallizes (Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). It may be a formative time for a professional ethos as well.

The participant was selected from a pool of early childhood education graduates in a large southwestern university. The early childhood teacher certification program at this university requires a graduate component for completion. The graduate component consists of student teaching (internship) and a concurrent course in action research. Because of state requirements, the internship in early childhood

education is performed in a split placement, half in preschool or kindergarten and half in primary. In the case of this university, students have eight weeks of practice in each placement. At the same time, they study action research methodology and conduct a brief action research project. Their action research question is self-selected and is based on a problem or dilemma encountered during student teaching.

The participant's teacher education program has a strong constructivist orientation. Coursework and fieldwork are increasingly integrated throughout the program. Students in the early childhood program are involved in three levels of field experience before graduation, as well as a practicum experience in a community organization serving children and/or families. The first level is largely a classroom observation experience. The second level field experience occurs in conjunction with a course in educational psychology. The third level field experience is two semesters (half day per week) in the university laboratory preschool under the guidance of university instructors and a subsequent capstone project in a public school classroom. For the capstone project, students collaborate with a small peer group to develop and implement emergent curriculum. Despite regular opportunities to interact with children, most students do not take full charge of a classroom by themselves until their student teaching.

The participant was a new graduate in her first eight weeks of student teaching. She was placed in a kindergarten classroom in the town of Springfield, located about a half-hour drive from the university. Before conducting research in the setting, I had served as a supervisor to other student teachers who were placed there. I thought that it was a socially complex context that would be an interesting setting for research on teachers' moral development.

Some of the complexity of the context came from the diverse student body. Springfield only has one elementary school. The town is situated in a prosperous rural community where farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers mix with professionals, business people, trades people, and people working service jobs. At the time of this study, the kindergarten classes in Springfield included some children who spoke more Spanish than English, a few Native American and African American children, children from widely varied income groups, and children with parents of widely varied educational backgrounds. Children with special needs were in the regular education classroom for the full half-day session that was provided the other students. (They were with the special education teacher the other half of the school day.)

The social complexity of the context was enhanced by a team teaching arrangement. Two certified teachers shared a large classroom, as they had for 17 years. The classroom was set up so that each teacher had an area to meet with her class of about twenty children for "group time." These group time areas were at opposite ends of the classroom. The teachers would use group times for singing, stories, games, calendar routines, and reviewing letters and sounds. They could usually manage to end their group meetings at the same time.

Most of the room was permanently set up in "centers." Centers included a large block area, a library, a science corner with class pets and revolving interactive displays, a sensory/water table, a dramatic play center with housekeeping and an office, tables for various art activities and easels for painting, and shelves full of puzzles and math manipulatives. During center time, children were also encouraged to visit at least one table where a more structured activity was offered. The teachers planned in interdisciplinary thematic units that usually lasted from one to three weeks.

Each teacher also had an assistant. The two assistants functioned as independent members of the teaching team. Although the certified teachers were responsible for curricular decisions, the assistants sat in on weekly "planning sessions" and usually led a structured table activity during center time. They also handled record keeping, collections from students, and field trip arrangements. They set up new centers and handled their own duty assignments. During the time that I was in the field, it was very common for both teachers, both assistants, and the student teacher to talk after school about everything they'd seen that day that was remarkable or interesting.

Another thing that made the context socially interesting was the involvement of parents and other community members in the school. The participant commented on the enthusiastic parent involvement in special events. I participated in one of these special events and was astounded at the attendance. There were very few children without guests and some children had several guests: parents, aunts or uncles, grandparents, and/or siblings. Parents and other caregivers also had frequent brief contact with the faculty on a daily basis. I observed a few parents coming into the room before each session of kindergarten, and noticed that they were not the same parents each time. Teachers and assistants loaded children into cars and spoke with parents and caregivers at the end of each session as well. The families in the community were

well known to the faculty. The teachers commented on the older siblings of present students, some of whom had been their students in previous years.

Because the teachers encouraged it, members of the community were frequently involved in classroom life. On one day that I observed, a minister and a police officer from the community came to read to the children. The superintendent dropped in during the special event that I attended and talked with parents for nearly an hour. The teachers were well acquainted with the manager of a local daycare that took many of their students for before and after school care. I saw this manager come in several times to visit the teachers when she dropped off the children for school. Former students came to help with after school classroom clean-up and shared stories of what they were doing and what their siblings were doing. The classes also took regular field trips to a local nursing home.

During informal interviews, conversations with the teachers, and observations, I was able to get a general idea about the decision making process in the school community. I found that the teachers in the early childhood wing of the school were not compelled to follow all the guidelines and requirements adopted by the grades, but that they worked very closely with each other to develop their own guidelines. Besides the two teachers in the classroom that served as the context of the study, there were another kindergarten teacher and a preschool teacher on the same hallway. Most of the time, the teachers met between morning and afternoon sessions to eat lunch together.

The independence of the early childhood faculty within the school system was exemplified in a story that one of the team teachers volunteered during a supervisory conference. Ms. Harris said that she had been at Springfield a short time before Ms. Morris came. The district was starting to institute standardized testing at younger grades and Ms. Harris went along with it reluctantly. When Ms. Morris came, according to Ms. Harris, she said, "Oh, no, that isn't appropriate for kindergarten." Her statement gave Ms. Harris courage and she spoke up to agree with her. They visited the superintendent, who reportedly looked at how much the testing would cost if it was continued with the growing population in Springfield and agreed to drop standardized testing at the kindergarten level (and below). Ms. Morris added later, "Now whenever the administration suggests something that would be inappropriate developmentally, we just speak up and say, 'Oh, kindergarten doesn't do that.'"

On the other hand, when I visited a faculty meeting, I found that the early childhood teachers did not sit together. They took whatever seats were available and used breaks in the meeting to meet and greet the "teachers upstairs," as they referred to the teachers in the grades. They participated in school wide, community-building events as well, even though they also held a series of evening events just for kindergarten children and parents. The only reason that I ever heard being given for divergence from the rest of the school was, "That wouldn't be appropriate for our kids."

During informal lunch time conversations, I found that the early childhood teachers did coordinate efforts on curriculum development. Together they had developed, and continued to develop, a daily journaling process that was the heart of their literacy curriculum. They also were active in teachers' organizations, took turns attending the School Board meetings, and stayed abreast of educational developments at the state level. They considered themselves advocates for young children in all these settings.

The diverse student body, the team teaching situation, the community involvement, and the close cooperation of the early childhood faculty in advocating for children made the setting socially complex and interesting. Making sense of that context and operating in it was potentially challenging.

Amanda, the study participant, was in her late twenties, married to a man several years older, and a "settled homeowner." She had come to the university by a nontraditional route. Amanda had first become involved in early childhood education during high school, when she decided to take a vocational education option in childcare. She traveled to a vocational education center during the school day to take classes and work in the daycare there. Amanda went on to earn her credential as a Child Development Associate and worked in childcare as she continued her education at a local junior college. While still at the junior college, she had the opportunity to work in an innovative new program for teenage mothers and their children. The program was designed to provide daycare for young parents so that they could finish high school, while also providing parent education and guidance. Amanda was responsible for one of the infant rooms and spoke daily with young mothers as they dropped off their infants, came for a daily playtime with them, and came after school to pick them up again. Because of schedule conflicts, Amanda had to quit this job to continue her education at the university.

Data collection involved multiple sources of information for purposes of triangulation (Creswell, 1998). I was able to use a combination of observations, interviews, and artifacts to provide different viewpoints. Because I was primarily interested in Amanda's thinking and decision making process as she interacted with the setting, the data collection focused on her activity and thinking. When I collected others' perspectives, it was primarily to compare perceptions of the events and circumstances in which the participant was operating.

Entry into the setting began with two "gatekeepers," the certification chair for early childhood education at the university and the administrator responsible for the school site. The certification chair was interested in the possible benefits and risks to the participant. The greatest risk was breach of confidentiality. Because student teachers are at the beginning of their teaching careers, and not yet gainfully employed, I knew that the participant would be particularly sensitive to this risk. I asked her to select a code name early in the research process, so that data could be identified with the code name only. Although the school setting was not the focus of the study, it needed to be richly described. Because of that "insider's" description, it was important to protect the identity of the setting as well.

Another concern relating to the participant was that the study would not detract from her student teaching experience. I hoped that the extra time for reflection during interviews might enhance the experience, but I didn't want to distract the participant from her own professional priorities or make her uncomfortably self-conscious about her decisions (possibly distorting the data as well). I worked to maintain a nonjudgmental role, because I did not want to constrain Amanda's thinking and decision making process. Because I was older, had classroom teaching experience, and was a teaching assistant at her university, my presence was potentially that of an unofficial authority. I wanted a relationship of mutual respect with her so that she would be able to operate according to her own understanding.

Amanda was aware that I supervised most of the early childhood student teachers. However, I did not supervise Amanda for two reasons. Information gained as a researcher might have influenced the evaluation process in ways that would be unfair to the participant, or the evaluation process might have constrained candid participation in the research project as described above. Amanda twice asked me for feedback on her teaching. In each case, I just assured her that she was doing fine. I said that I was not really

thinking about her teaching effectiveness while I was there, but that I would surely have noticed if there had been anything that bothered me.

By carefully refraining from judging her actions, I felt that I safeguarded both the research climate and the quality of the student teaching experience. However, I know that I had an influence on Amanda during the time that I was collecting data. To the best of my knowledge, the strongest influence that I had was to encourage reflection that might not have taken place otherwise. The questions I asked and the frequency with which I asked them made it nearly impossible for Amanda to avoid reflecting on her own thoughts and actions. This undoubtedly influenced the course of her professional moral development. However, this was a methodological conundrum, because there was no way to gain access to Amanda's thought processes without having her represent her thoughts in some way. That process of representation encouraged reflection.

The second gatekeeper, the school principal, was concerned with how the research would impact the school site. She was primarily concerned with the possible risks to the children and my potential intrusion on the educational process. Originally, I had planned to videotape Amanda each time I came to observe. I thought that these videotapes would be helpful for later reflection during interviews. However, the principal was concerned about my photographing children. I agreed to avoid including them in the tape. My agreement to avoid photographing the children turned out to be a restriction that limited the value of the videotapes somewhat.

Amanda began her student teaching in January, the middle of the academic year. She embraced the project enthusiastically, especially after she realized that I would not be evaluating her teaching, even informally. Several times she asked me, "Are you getting enough? Is this helping?" Her eagerness to participate meant that interviews could be extended well past school hours or could even take place in the evenings on campus.

I adopted the role of participant observer in the classroom. I observed and participated in various school events: classroom life at various times of day with both morning and afternoon sessions, student arrival and departure, lunch time with the teachers, a special Valentines Day "tea party" with parents and guests, a faculty meeting, and after-school conversations while setting up for the next day. During these observation periods, I talked informally with Amanda, interacted with the teachers and assistants, helped

with center set-up and clean-up, and assisted children with their work. I made twelve visits over eight weeks, ranging in length from two hours to the entire day. These observations were recorded in field notes made the same day after leaving the setting.

Amanda and I discussed classroom events and conversations during interviews that followed the observations. I conducted eight interviews over the eight week period. A few of the interviews included a review of videotape made earlier in the day. One interview was a half-hour phone interview, but most interviews were held after school in the classroom. These interviews lasted about 45 minutes to an hour. A ninth interview was held away from the setting after Amanda had completed her work there. This interview lasted a little over two hours.

I transcribed the audiotapes of interviews as soon as possible, often before the next interview. If this was not possible, I replayed the tapes to discover dominant themes and make interpretive notes. This gave me the opportunity for "member checking" (Merriam, 1988). Usually this would take the form of a question in the next interview, "I wanted to ask you about something you said the other day..." It also gave me a chance to direct the interview questions into areas that my initial interpretations indicated might be fruitful lines of inquiry.

When Amanda began teaching, I began videotaping portions of the day. I soon found that my equipment made it difficult to exclude the children from the tapes during the times when they were free to move about the room. Therefore, my taping was limited to large group times. I taped three of these sessions. In each case, I replayed the tape with Amanda that afternoon to guide our reflection on the day. During the first of these sessions, I gave the remote control to Amanda and asked her to stop it wherever she had something to say. In the other two sessions, either of us could stop the tape at any point for a discussion. Although group times did figure prominently in our interviews, Amanda frequently brought up student responses that were not visible on the tape and talked about other parts of the day as well. The tapes may have played a role in her memory of events, but appeared to be of limited value. I also attracted a lot of attention from the children when I walked in with a large camera and tripod and Amanda was more nervous on the days that I was taping. She would sigh with relief on the days that I didn't bring the camera. I decided that in the context of this study, the camera was contributing to a slight distortion in the data.

With or without videotape, most interviews still took the form of debriefing sessions in which I probed for events that Amanda saw as problematic.

Amanda also provided me with a copy of the reflective journal that she kept during the study. This journal was kept as a part of the student teaching requirement and was meant to serve as a way for her to establish the habit of reflecting on her teaching practice. The journals helped me gain a broader picture of Amanda's professional concerns during her first eight weeks of student teaching and better understand the relative importance of professional morality and ethics in those concerns.

Amanda's university supervisor was an additional source of information. Amanda's supervisor was also her instructor for the action research class that she was taking concurrently. The supervisor generated and collected a number of documents that represented her perspective on Amanda's general professional growth as well as the perspectives of Amanda and her cooperating teachers. Amanda and her supervisor conferred before and after each of two formal observations and participated, with one of her cooperating teachers, in an evaluative conference toward the end of her weeks in the setting. I observed and audio-recorded these conferences. The conferences involved discussion of particular events and varying perceptions of events and provided triangulation for Amanda's interview accounts and my observations. Amanda also gave me a copy of her report on the action research project completed during her student teaching experience.

All the data collected were assembled in hard copy chronologically, with the exception of the videotapes. The tapes were dated and filed separately. I also kept a notebook in which I recorded "odds and ends." The notebook had references to consult, notes about ill-formulated questions and concerns, quotes about research in general that were gleaned from various sources, and personal reflections on the process. This notebook was helpful in constructing a subjectivity audit (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and in "picking up lost threads" during analysis.

I began analysis during the data collection process as described above. I found that transcribing audiotapes myself, and writing field notes after leaving the setting for the day, gave me time and opportunity to "listen" for themes. Listening for themes was compatible with what I intended to accomplish in my research, namely "a way of seeing" professional moral development in teaching (Schon, 1983). I also

made interpretive notes and developed questions for subsequent interviews. I held the themes that I identified early as conditional and tentative, but they informed my data collection.

During data collection, I also analyzed my own perspective and began to construct a subjectivity audit (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I noticed that I quickly became comfortable in the school setting. The community was diverse and tolerant. The teachers in the setting were down to earth, experienced teachers. They were near my age and held similar philosophical views about education. The classroom atmosphere was calm and pleasant. (The university supervisor shared this same perception and volunteered it during conferences.) Very quickly, I realized that I would have to work to keep from identifying myself with the setting in Amanda's eyes. In particular, I wanted Amanda to feel free to disclose any misgivings or discomfort she had with the setting or the cooperating teachers. Amanda felt free to make decisions about curriculum that she saw as divergent from the usual procedure in the classroom and a possible improvement. She talked to me about her decisions and seemed completely without conflict about it. Either she did not see me as a part of the setting or she perceived her decisions to be inoffensive to her cooperating teachers, or both.

However, I did notice myself becoming increasingly identified with the setting. I began to see myself more as a participant as the weeks progressed. The more I enjoyed my time in the classroom, the less I wanted to be seen as someone from the "ivory tower" who came and went at will. I began to feel discomfort with my observer and researcher role as I identified more strongly with the context and participant. I found myself feeling affection toward the children and toward the adults that cared about them. While affection reduces the distance between the researcher and the researched, it also softens the "sharp, harsh light" that dispassion can bring to the research process (Peshkin, 1991). I was aware of my subjective attachment to the people in the setting during my fieldwork and thought of it as an emotional lens. Becoming more aware of ways in which my attachment might "color" my view of the setting helped me to maintain some distance from my own emotional responses during data collection.

The nature of the data, my research purposes, and the results of the preliminary analysis determined the procedures to be followed in formal analysis. The chronological arrangement of the data set facilitated the search for change over time. It also made it easy to search for divergent viewpoints on specific events or evidence that Amanda was not operating in a way consistent with her description of her

thought processes. After listening for themes and identifying them, I wrote brief descriptions of the themes and revisited the data again and again to develop and expand them with actual events, statements by the participant, and statements made by others in the setting. In a few cases, I charted events and statements over time to be sure that a particular dilemma was thoroughly described in the text. During this process of development and enrichment, I continued to check for accuracy as I revisited the data. I also reconsidered the importance of the themes and questioned the ways in which my choice of descriptive vocabulary might constitute interpretation of the data (Peshkin, 2000). These processes helped me to look for relationships between and within themes. I then used direct interpretation to identify patterns (Creswell, 1998).

Results

Amanda began her student teaching with a fairly complex model of her responsibilities as a teacher already developed. Her understanding of the scope of her responsibilities did not change appreciably during the time she participated in this study. However, her understanding of how she would have to operate in order to fulfill those responsibilities did change. The change in her understanding was evident in the way she interpreted her setting differently and operated in her new professional role.

During Amanda's first interview, I asked her to describe the responsibilities of teachers. She described those responsibilities in the framework of a widening circle. At the center of the circle was the responsibility to children. In a little wider circle was the responsibility to children's families. She said that a child couldn't be separated from the family and dealt with in isolation. The next realm of responsibility was to colleagues. Amanda said that in addition to relationships with individual colleagues, a teacher had a responsibility to the school as a whole. To summarize, she said, "I think everything's kind of connected to each other. They're parts of each other, but what happens to one piece of it affects everything else."

Amanda's description of a teacher's responsibilities resembled an ecological model of contextual influences on children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Amanda learned about ecological theory in her program, and so she may have adopted the "widening circle of context" to describe the social complexity of her influence and responsibility as a teacher. Her ability to articulate this idea on the third day of her student teaching suggested that she expected teaching to be complex and social in nature.

I began data collection during the first week, transcribing and listening for themes at the same time that I was conducting interviews, visiting the school, and videotaping group times. The initial analysis

(during and immediately after data collection) yielded two closely connected themes relating to Amanda's professional moral activity: the need to socially construct the role of teacher and a consistent preference for preserving relationships above other values. Subsequent (more detailed) analysis yielded a third theme: the situated nature of Amanda's professional decisions. The third theme tied the first two themes together more closely and revealed the complexity of Amanda's way of operating in the classroom. Each of these themes appeared in my observations of Amanda's moral activity in the classroom, as well as in her descriptions of her moral problem-solving process.

Amanda's Construction of her Role as Teacher Amanda's understanding and construction of her role as teacher influenced her perceived and actual capacity to make professional decisions and act on them, the heart of professional moral activity. Therefore Amanda's ability to construct a functional role in the classroom was crucial to her professional moral activity and development. Role construction in a new setting is similar to construction of a self (Mead, 1934) in that the interaction between the individual and the group results in the gradually negotiated model of a person's function in the group. Without these models, human beings would find it hard to predict each other's behavior, and stable social organization would be impossible. The fact that Amanda understood that her role would be socially complex before she ever began to interact with others in her new setting may explain why role construction became a complicated process for her.

Amanda often expressed the need to "be a real teacher" or "feel like a real teacher." During our first interview, Amanda was already concerned about how she would fit into the classroom. In response to a very open-ended question (What have you noticed about your school?), Amanda described how the two teachers and two assistants had very similar roles in the eyes of the children. She said that the assistants led center time activities and the children went to the assistants and teachers for help with equal confidence. Amanda then described the difference that she had seen in the teachers' roles and the assistants' roles, saying, "The only time that the assistant teachers aren't actively involved is during group time." Amanda also said that she felt supported and trusted because she had been introduced to the class as "one of the teachers" and had already been allowed to lead group time once. She described the teachers and assistants as having "a lot of respect for each other," and she expressed pleasure at being introduced and included. However, later in the interview, she also expressed anxiety about her new role.

Amanda said several times in that first interview that she felt comfortable at Springfield. She also said that she felt like she could make decisions on her own, especially when it came to guiding children during center time. I probed, "Is that because you understand their rationale or you feel confident that they trust you or…" Amanda jumped in, "I feel like I understand their rationale." She went on to describe the ways in which the curriculum and the procedures in the classroom resembled the best practices as she had learned them in her teacher preparation at the university and elsewhere. Then she added, "They've welcomed me into the classroom and they've shown me where everything is, and they've told me that I can make decisions and they've made me feel like I'm a part of the classroom."

Amanda's anxiety seemed to be specific to her role in the social organization of the classroom and how that role related to the role of "Teacher." She saw the role of teacher as something different from the roles she had filled previously. As she described it, "…still I feel like I'm at the total beginning because … even though I've had quite a few field experiences and I've volunteered, now it's my turn to be the responsible one in the classroom, be the teacher." When I asked for clarification, she said,

> I can walk into a classroom and I can immediately find kids to work with and things to do, ways to interact and become a part of the community with the teachers … but I have never had the opportunity to be the teacher where someone else is walking into the classroom… That's what's new to me, transitioning from that person who always has a teacher there… [to] the one who knows what to do.

Amanda appeared to be connecting the role she desired with knowledge, leadership, and responsibility. The "Teacher" is the one who "knows what to do," and the other adults in the room, as well as the children, take their cue from her. Amanda appeared to be unsure if she would "know what to do."

Although Amanda was warmly welcomed and included, she did have to work to construct the leadership role she desired and win the confidence of her colleagues. An incident that occurred during Amanda's second week exemplified the difficulties involved in constructing a new role and demonstrated one way in which Amanda's role construction affected her professional moral activity. Considering Amanda's understanding of group time leadership as a crucial function of the teacher, it is important that the incident occurred during an afternoon group time. I was there that afternoon and observed the events as

they happened. Therefore, I was able to observe how Amanda operated in the situation and discuss it with her later.

In the afternoon class was a child with some perceptual difficulties and developmental delays. Shari had trouble attending to a story or lesson for more than a few minutes and often required a little extra guidance. Even though she did not express herself well verbally, she had a great smile and relied on a few key questions to grab Amanda's attention, such as, "Am I the helper?" From what I heard in after school conversations, I concluded that all the teachers and assistants enjoyed Shari's sociable and charming personality. However, they expressed mild frustration with her apparent preference for being in front of the group with all eyes on her!

On the day of the incident, Amanda noticed that Shari was getting restless and noisy and brought her up directly in front of the calendar (which was being updated and discussed). Soon after, one of the assistants noticed that Shari was out of her regular assigned place (still very physically restless and turned around, grinning at the other children instead of looking at the calendar). The assistant moved her back to her usual spot and told her to sit quietly. Amanda explained to the assistant that she had asked Shari to sit near the calendar, but the assistant said that Shari had been "up there putting on a show." At this point Amanda started talking very quietly with the assistant, smiling and explaining, but Shari remained where the assistant had taken her.

Later I telephoned Amanda to discuss the incident. I wanted to find out what had motivated Amanda's actions and how she had perceived the assistant's actions. Amanda said that she had noticed that Shari was not paying attention to the calendar routine so she moved her to a place right at her knee and in front of the calendar. Amanda said in our conversation that she knew that Shari was still not paying attention, but she thought that a few more minutes might have given Shari a chance to calm down. The assistant had interrupted that. After first attempting to explain her action, Amanda realized that the interruption had already occurred and that she was just interrupting group time for all the children by arguing the point.

Amanda perceived the whole situation as one in which the assistant was trying to be helpful (as did I), but Amanda saw her freedom to make decisions about disciplining children to be constrained by that helpfulness. Amanda also had her confidence shaken because the assistant saw her as someone needing

help. She concluded our conversation by saying that her place in the classroom was still "weird" because she was taking a leadership position over an assistant who had been there a long time. In her journal entry for that day, she said, "...I knew that she was trying to help, but I also felt confused about my place in the relationship that I am building with her. I need to establish myself as a legitimate teacher in the classroom. I don't think that this experience helped."

As a group time leader, Amanda was trying to make decisions that considered the possible consequences for all those to whom she was professionally responsible. She wanted Shari to be a part of the group and gain as much as possible from the calendar routine and all the other activities. However, Amanda was having trouble considering everyone's needs at once. As she left group to argue Shari's needs, she realized that group time had been interrupted for all the other students and that they were quickly losing interest. Amanda was still cognizant that relationships with colleagues fell in her realm of responsibility as well. Considering so many possible consequences in her "widening circle" of responsibility proved to be somewhat confusing.

Also during the second week of Amanda's student teaching, I was able to be in the classroom two consecutive days for the afternoon session. On one of these days, Ms. Harris was present at the back of the room while Amanda led group. On the other day, Ms. Harris was out of school due to illness. Ms. Morris was leading her group time at the opposite end of the room. The two assistants were also there, but Amanda was definitely less confident leading group when Ms. Harris was not there. I noticed that she stalled for a few minutes after clean-up time and even after the children assembled. She paused frequently during group as if she was unsure what to do next. She sat with her arms and legs close to her body and didn't look beyond the first couple of rows of children. I noticed these behaviors occasionally when Ms. Harris was there, but on the day she was absent they were pronounced and continual. I did not notice this kind of hesitance or retreat during the hour before group, when Amanda was interacting with individual children at their centers.

I connected Amanda's extreme hesitancy with her view of the teacher as the one in charge while others take a subordinate role, "the one who knows what to do." I speculated that without Ms. Harris there to legitimate her right to be in front of the group, Amanda felt less confident. However, after school, when I asked her if anything was "on her mind," the subject she chose to discuss surprised me. She was concerned

about a child in the morning with emotional problems and the child in the afternoon with developmental delay. She had been observing them, wondering how to help them manage themselves during group time. I noticed that Amanda still left the group sitting "unattended" while she dealt with Shari.

Even though she expressed more concern for the two children with specific group time problems, there was evidence that Amanda was not comfortable with the way she was handling group time overall. During our interview that week, she indicated that she felt the need to take a stronger hand during group meetings, but it was not a simple matter of assertiveness for Amanda. During the interview, she vacillated between her concern for individual children, consideration of the group as a whole, and the need to use the brief time effectively given the curricular demands. She said, "We only have like thirty minutes to get group done... and even though I'd like to hear what each kid has to say, when they have something to say, sometimes they just can't [contribute] because we have to move on." She said that she was having a hard time establishing firmer control and leading children quickly from one activity to the next. While viewing a tape of herself leading group, Amanda said, "I was trying to find my way with it all. It just took a little longer than I wanted it to."

Amanda said that Mrs. Harris accomplished a lot more during group meetings, but she wasn't sure how to go about it herself. Amanda said that she still wanted the children involved and that she wanted to hear what they had to say. During her group times she seemed to do the same thing she did during the interview. She swayed back and forth, one minute allowing the children an open forum and later asserting her need to lead with a firmer hand. She was visibly struggling to find a balance between active involvement on the part of the children and her leadership role as the teacher.

At the same time, Amanda was aware that the role she was constructing was affecting the behavior of the children in the classroom, putting everything into flux. She said, "... the more responsibility I take on, the more things change and ... I just kind of change and adapt to stuff. And if I'm doing that, then the kids are doing that. It's not just me and it's not just them." In my observations, I noticed that the children began responding to her hesitance during group time by taking the lead themselves. They would remind her of what should be next if she paused. They would suggest a song or say, "You forgot our letters." Usually Amanda would immediately take their suggestion and move on, saying, "Thank you. We need to do that."

Amanda was concentrating a lot on her function as group time leader for the children, but she was still concerned about being seen as a professional by her colleagues. As mentioned earlier, after the incident during calendar the second week, Amanda noted in her journal that the incident was regrettable because it did not help build the relationship with the assistant that she wanted. Other aspects of the teacher role were closely tied to collegiality as well. Some of them Amanda found confusing.

Amanda's journal for the first three weeks is full of references to collegial relationships and her role as teacher. For example, she wrote, "It is difficult to fit in with the assistant teachers. They know a lot more about what goes on, yet I am walking into the situation as a teacher not an assistant." Because Amanda connected leadership with "knowing what to do," the knowledge that the assistants had of procedures and protocol in the classroom and the school at large was threatening.

Amanda also expressed discomfort with the temporary aspect of her role. She said, "...I feel that even though I am welcomed, they know that it is only temporary and that I really don't have a permanent place in the culture of the school." After her first faculty meeting, she simply wrote, "I felt out of place." Being warmly treated, accepted, and included was not adequate to relieve the role-related insecurity that Amanda felt during the first three weeks of her student teaching.

During the third week, immediately following the two days described above, there was a spell of icy weather that closed the schools for several days. When school resumed (Amanda's fourth week), I noticed a change in her behavior toward Shari when Shari disrupted afternoon group. The moment that she jumped up to stand in front of the group, begging to be "the helper," Amanda turned to her and told her kindly but firmly that it was time for her to sit down and listen. Previously, besides moving Shari to her knee, Amanda had tried to turn her attention back to the lesson by answering her questions briefly and physically directing her back to her spot, a time-consuming process.

After school, I told Amanda that I had noticed the change. She immediately began to explain her actions. She said that she was trying to find a balance, but that she felt she had to be more direct with all the children. For one thing, she realized that Shari was settling into a disruptive routine and that she was being rewarded with attention from the rest of the class. She said that some of the other children, the ones who were younger developmentally, were also likely to act on impulse and share their thoughts without considering if it was an appropriate time. She felt like it was understandable and normal behavior for small

children, but she couldn't let it continue because they weren't learning to function as a part of a group. After discussing it with Ms. Harris and thinking it over, she had consciously decided to be direct and firm with the children when they interrupted group. She said, "There's me time and there's group time."

During a supervisory conference in the fifth week, Amanda expressed more confidence in her role. She told her supervisor during a post-observation conference, "I love the kids and I feel like they're being comfortable with me now. They've gotten accustomed to the fact that I'm a teacher in the room." Amanda's supervisor commented on the wonderful cooperation between teachers and assistants, and that it was "like a team." Amanda said,

> ...when I first got here, I had to find my place in that team. I wasn't the assistant, and I'm not a teacher. I am a teacher, but not a regular classroom teacher. And I had to kind of find my place within that, but they were eager to help me find my place and be comfortable, so I'm enjoying it.

On the day that Amanda met with her supervisor, I was able to observe both the group times that she led. Her pacing was more comfortable and even than the previous week. She had a little trouble transitioning from an active song to the more sedate activity of updating the calendar during the morning group. In the afternoon, she added a quiet verse to the song, which helped the children settle down more easily. Amanda was beginning to make decisions that she felt comfortable enacting. Some of these decisions related primarily to her effectiveness as an educator rather than her moral responsibility. However, she was able to make those decisions because she was less frequently paralyzed by her confusion about the complexity of her responsibilities.

Some aspects of Amanda's role as a teacher still confused her. For example, she was invited to "march on the capitol" with her cooperating teachers to support an important piece of education legislation that was coming before the state legislature. After first hearing about it, Amanda wrote in her journal, "One thing that I am confused about is the rally that is going to take place." She described her dilemma at that point as twofold. She was not sure how visible and controversial her participation might be. She wrote, "I don't want to jeopardize my career future by making a political mistake." She also wrote that she felt "out of the loop," because the teachers she worked with had a long history of involvement in advocacy issues. They had also shared a great deal of that history with each other and spoke to each other in a kind of shorthand, referring to issues that had taken years to resolve with a single phrase. Amanda wanted details.

By the time the rally took place, Amanda had resolved her fear of alienating potential employers. However, she still was confused about some of the significant issues involved. In an interview a few days after the rally, she said that the other teachers "seemed to know all about it" and she still wasn't sure of the significance of all the issues. This made her feel like a follower who wasn't sure why she was doing what she was doing. A small group of citizens had protested the teachers leaving their classrooms to take political action, so I asked Amanda if she thought it was important to be politically active or if she thought teachers would be more responsible if they remained in their classrooms. She made it clear that she felt that advocacy and political action were an important aspect of a teacher's responsibility. However, she said that she didn't think she had the time at this stage in her career to become more informed, and consequently she had made a decision to put off that responsibility until some time in the future.

This was the one specific addition that Amanda made to her "widening circle" of professional responsibility. She recognized that there were responsibilities beyond the immediate community, a wider child advocacy role. She explained this by saying that there were people in positions of authority that could make decisions about what would happen in classrooms that they had never seen. She saw it as another responsibility of teachers and other educators to inform those people in authority about the real needs of children. However, her experience in the first few weeks of her student teaching had taught her something about her own limitations. She told me that she was not ready to personally take on any more responsibility and had made a conscious decision to think about a broader child advocacy role at some point in the future.

By the end of the sixth week, Amanda reported having days that went "smoothly" and didn't require a lot of reexamination in the evening. I asked her to explain what a smooth day was and to describe her reflection process. She described a "smooth" day as one in which events unfolded in a manner similar to what she would have predicted. Of course, not all days went smoothly. She said, "...if things didn't work out like I thought they should, then that's when I really go over it more." "Going over it more" now included conversing with her cooperating teachers and the assistants after school, as well as a kind of "mulling over" of incidents that confused or troubled her after she got home.

Although Amanda started her internship aware of the complexity of the social context of teaching, as evidenced by her "widening circle of responsibility," she still had a lot to learn about that context. By her sixth week, she was able to look back at some of the knowledge she'd gained.

> ...a lot of what's going on in learning how to be a teacher doesn't even have to do with interacting with the kids itself. I think that's one of the easier parts is being with the kids. It's everything else that I'm doing ... I'm having to figure all that out. A lot of it is social, but some days I feel like I'm on top of the game and other days I'm like, 'OK. I'm not even clued into what happened.'

I observed Amanda functioning in this complicated social landscape with more confidence during her sixth week. She was less tense and physically restrained. In her interview that week, she said that she had accepted the temporary nature of her assignment and that even if she would never be *the* real teacher, she was *a* real teacher.

Finally, during Amanda's seventh week, she announced to me quite decisively, "I feel like I'm the real teacher." She explained that she felt this way because the assistants were coming to her with questions. Because Amanda was planning the curriculum at that point by herself, the assistants would ask questions such as, "What do you want done here?" Amanda said that the first time they did that, she almost sent them to Ms. Harris or Ms. Morris and then she realized that they would not know how to answer the assistant's questions and she did! Amanda finally saw herself being "the one who knows what to do." It surprised her somewhat. As she said,

> It kind of feels like a weird role that I hadn't really realized that I had grown into. I guess it's kind of like a kid not fully realizing that they can do something until they're there and they're doing it.

In others' actions toward her, she saw herself in a new role.

During her eighth week, Amanda surprised herself even more. The minute I walked into the classroom that week, Ms. Harris said, "Guess what? Amanda told one of the kids that she was the teacher!" When I had a chance to talk to Amanda, she said, "You'll never guess what I did." According to Ms. Harris and Amanda, the event happened like this: During group time, a reluctant "helper," Macon, was leading the class through the calendar routine. Chester, one of the more outgoing children, decided to "help the helper" by instructing him on what to do step by step. Amanda reminded Chester that it wasn't his turn to be the helper. A little later, she said, "If Macon needs help, I'll help him. I think he's doing fine." When this still didn't stop Chester's relentless directions to Macon, Amanda said, "Chester, I'm the teacher in this room!" His response was to look startled and say, "Oh! OK." I asked Amanda later in our private interview how

she felt about that, because she seemed a little embarrassed, especially when Ms. Harris teased her about it. She said, "Well, I meant it when I said it." She was concerned that she hadn't been as tactful as she should have been, that perhaps she was trampling on Chester in order to elevate herself, and that apparently Macon hadn't really minded that much. However, she also said that there had to be boundaries. It was her job to see that one child didn't "take over the whole class."

During the seventh and eighth week of her student teaching, there was a change in the way that Amanda viewed her role, as stated above. Up until that time, although she was functioning as a teacher in the classroom, she deferred to one of the cooperating teachers in times of stress. Several times I had observed Amanda starting a song only to forget the words or appearing unsure how and when to transition out of group time. In those cases, Amanda could look to the back of the room and Ms. Harris would step in and take the lead. When Ms. Harris wasn't at the back of the room due to illness, Amanda was very hesitant and retiring. For the first few weeks of her student teaching, Amanda's "fallback" method of operation (Oser, 1994) was to delegate or avoid. Even though she constantly consulted different viewpoints when she wasn't under stress, under pressure she delegated her responsibility to her cooperating teacher.

After the day that Amanda realized that she could answer the assistant's questions and her cooperating teachers could not, she apparently stopped delegating decisions she felt unsure about. Instead, during the frustrating episode with Chester, Amanda unilaterally controlled the situation by asserting her authority. Both she and Ms. Harris were surprised. It was uncharacteristic behavior for Amanda. However, she took complete responsibility for what she'd done. She didn't think it was a perfect solution, but she had felt the need to take action. Apparently Amanda had a new "fallback," unilateral action.

As Amanda constructed a respected and more predictable professional role in the classroom community, her actual and perceived range of choice was enlarged. She made more decisions about how children would be disciplined, developed and adjusted curriculum according to children's needs, and worked directly with parents. Her hesitant attempts to engage in these activities in the first two weeks were sometimes inadvertently impeded by the helpful actions of teachers and assistants as well as her own self-doubt. Her expanded choice and sense of agency made it possible for her to act in ways that she would later regret, but she was willing to make decisions and take responsibility for them. Until Amanda saw herself as

having a decision to make, she could not see herself to having moral responsibility. Therefore, constructing a responsible role in the classroom was an integral part of Amanda's professional moral development.

Preserving Relationships First A consistent theme throughout the eight-week period was Amanda's inclination to preserve relationships, even when inconvenient and sometimes at the expense of consistency or complete truthfulness. Although an important part of Amanda's method of operation, this was not a habit that she acquired during her student teaching. Amanda's inclination to preserve relationships was evidently something that she brought into her student teaching. From the beginning, she believed that as a teacher, she would be able to do a better job more easily if she had positive professional relationships.

During her first interview, Amanda said that her relationships with colleagues were important because, "If you don't get along with them and don't put an effort out to establish respectful, cooperative relationships, then that will make the job of teaching twice as hard." In one situation that fell outside the context of this study, Amanda used particularly vivid language to describe her reasoning. She described a time when she stepped back from being completely honest in discussing a child's behavior problems with an angry parent. She didn't express concern for the parent's feelings or fear of the parent's anger. She said that if she alienated the parent, she would be "burning a bridge" and that she would then be "jumping a canyon" in the future to work out solutions to the child's difficulties. Amanda seemed to be preserving relationships as a "first step" toward solving problems. Whenever Amanda compromised other values to preserve a relationship, she did not explain her actions as either altruistic or submissive, but always described herself as "losing the battle to win the war."

Also in our first interview, when I asked Amanda about a teacher's responsibilities, she said, "Telling parents how to raise their kids, that's not a teacher's responsibility." She went on to explain that some parents would seek help and that then the teacher would need to suggest options and point out multiple resources. Again this was not a course of action that Amanda considered more diplomatic or considerate of the parents feelings. She said that if teachers tried to dictate a course of action, expecting the parents to trust the teacher's expertise, and the plan did not prove to be helpful, then all hope of influencing the parents was lost.

Amanda also told me in the same interview that she had learned from her experience in daycare that while truthfulness was important, it wasn't always wise to be completely frank and direct with parents. She said,

> ...you really have to stand back and think, "OK. I need to tell them this, but maybe the most direct way is not the most appropriate." You may have to veer off and then come back and kind of ease them into what's going on, because if you just tell them right out what's happening, they could just shut down and no communication happens.

Amanda consistently explained her retreat to preserve relationships as a strategic decision, an action taken to keep lines of communication open and increase the opportunities for future collaboration.

However, I also noticed in the first interview that Amanda had an appreciation for parents in hardship situations. Some of her reluctance to confront parents with troublesome information might have been related to an understanding of the stresses that parents had to deal with, such as poverty and overwork. She said that for some families

> the emphasis isn't on education at this point... maybe both parents working and barely making the bills and barely having a roof over their heads... So that really takes away from the kids' education, and it's not intentional. The way things are, you either do or you don't. You either have a house over your head or you live out in the street.

Amanda did seem to have empathy for parents and recognized that they might have a different, and yet reasonable, view of their child's education. However, she consistently explained her actions in terms of their influence on potential communication and cooperation.

Amanda did appear to be operating in a way that would preserve relationships. One example was the way that Amanda retreated from a confrontation with the assistant on the day that she moved Shari during group time. Another was the way that Amanda worked to keep good relationships with individual children. In her first interview, she said that even "someone over there fidgeting" required that she be careful about a relationship, because "even if it doesn't concern parents or families... that kid knows what you did." She concluded by saying "there's always repercussions." I observed that Amanda was respectful of all the children. Her supervisor commented on this after her first observation. She was particularly

impressed with the way that Amanda managed to provide discipline and guidance privately, taking care not to embarrass a child in front of his or her peers.

Amanda's initial description of a teacher's responsibility as a "widening circle" was socially embedded. Her habit of preserving relationships first was compatible with her view of her responsibilities as a teacher, because responsibility and relationships were inseparable. In this way, Amanda seemed to perceive the moral landscape as a social minefield. All relationships were critical. Her understanding of her responsibilities as a teacher, formed during her long history of professional preparation and her experience in childcare led her to be careful about alienating anyone.

The Situated Nature of Problems in Practice A more complex theme that emerged after close analysis was the situated nature of the problems Amanda encountered in her professional practice. The messy circumstances in which problems presented themselves offered challenges and possibilities that influenced her moral activity. This messiness was not a complete surprise to Amanda. She knew before she began her student teaching that her responsibilities as a teacher would be complex, as exemplified in her model of a "widening circle" of responsibility. During our first interview, I asked Amanda to complete the statement, "An ethical and responsible teacher is one that..." Amanda began to describe those responsibilities and then said,

> It seems overwhelming, but from the experience that I've had in these short three days, when you're actually in it, in the classroom doing something with the kids, the decisions come so fast that it's better to know what...is ethically acceptable and not just what you think is ethical. That's where things start to get messy, because you're not just thinking of yourself. There are general, broad ethical considerations, but then you get down to personal ethics and then... I don't know. It sounds overwhelmingly scary...

At that point, Amanda was obviously frightened by the prospect of making decisions that affected so many people and thought there might be a way to make decisions based on "ethics." However, she also said, "I think an ethical and responsible teacher is one that can make decisions based on multiple perspectives and everyone involved, not just her, not just these kids, but the kids, the families, the teachers, the school, the community." Amanda expected social complexity.

By the fourth week, the complexity of her situation was uppermost in Amanda's mind. At the end of an interview during the fourth week, I asked, "Was there anything else you wanted to talk about today?" Amanda responded, "All the different kids and all the different needs. Doing one thing, but while you're doing that one thing, you need to keep in mind [that] it needs to be 20 different ways." When I asked her what she meant by that, Amanda listed all the specific adaptations she had to think about: identified perceptual problems, cerebral palsy, cleft palate, emotional problems, the side effects of medications that some of the children were taking for chronic conditions, and academic difficulties.

However, Amanda was most surprised to find that her various realms of responsibility would so often be in conflict and that the problems themselves were sometimes difficult to discern. For example, the physical classroom setting presented problems of complexity and uncertainty. Amanda said that she experienced the school day as a confusing array of multiple scenarios in process at the same time. She knew that her awareness of problem situations was limited to what she could actually see and hear in a large classroom of nearly 40 children, two teachers, two assistants, and herself. She soon learned to pay close attention to second hand accounts and to seek information from colleagues throughout the day. For example, I observed her stop while listening to a dispute between two children and verify something that one child reported that a teacher had said.

Also, like most teachers, Amanda had to make most of her professional decisions rapidly and in the presence of other children and other members of the school community. She realized that her decisions often involved deciding which of two or more conflicting needs would be satisfied (group vs. individual child, differing needs of individual children, parent vs. child, teachable moments vs. curricular requirements). Some of the problems that Amanda had in leading group centered around her consciousness of these competing interests. For example, she wanted individual children to share things that they considered to be related to the discussion, but she felt pressured by curricular demands to cut their comments short.

Amanda had to consider and reconsider her actual range of possible choices in a context that was a constantly shifting terrain of freedom and constraint. She asked, "How much time do we have?" throughout the day. Sometimes she would think she was "ahead of schedule" only to be interrupted by an unexpected event over which she had no control. One day in the middle of the morning session, the electricity went out

and she had to completely discard her plans to deal with the children's fears of severe weather and darkness. Just when her plan for group was moving smoothly one day, the child with a cleft palate broke his usual silence to share something with the class. Amanda stopped everything and took time to facilitate that contribution, making sure all the children understood what he said. In an interview toward the end of the eight weeks, Amanda described the problems she faced as "messy and personal and everything all at once" and herself as "muddling through" most decisions.

About halfway through her student teaching, Amanda said in an interview, "It's getting a little bit easier, but yet the more accustomed I get to it, the more I go home thinking, 'Well, how'd I do?'" She explained that at first she was concentrating on surviving the day without too much damage to anyone. As she became more confident of her ability to survive, she began to notice more subtle and ongoing problems. She also became aware that many problems couldn't be "fixed" by a quick change of behavior on her part. She said, "I can have all these thoughts about stuff, but sometimes thinking about it isn't necessarily helping me find the best way to do something." But with some humor and irony she said, "And other times you just take a shot in the dark and it turns out OK."

However, as Amanda took more responsibility, her reflection process got more complicated. In an interview during the sixth week, Amanda said that she often got to the end of the day tired and distracted. On the way home and at various points during the evening, she would revisit certain scenarios that disturbed her for some reason that she couldn't articulate. She would usually replay the scene over and over until she found the thing that was causing her psychic discomfort. Then she would reconsider her actions, think of what she could have done, decide if there was any way to change her decision, and then either make a plan of action or "make peace with it."

When asked how her program had prepared her for making professional moral decisions, Amanda said,

> ...you can read articles and you can discuss it hypothetically and plan it out in your mind what you're going to do, but until you're there and dealing with a real person in front of you expecting a response right then, I don't think really anything can prepare you.

Real decisions had to be made in real situations. Amanda found that teacher had to make moral decisions that consider the people involved, the time and place, what can be known at the point the decision must be made, and sometimes even whether or not the electricity is operational.

Toward the end of her student teaching, Amanda described her mode of operation in an interesting way. She said that her knowledge of the children, the setting, and the curriculum, as she had made sense of them during her nightly reflections, was like a backdrop that she was painting with great care. However, when she was teaching, she was an actor in front of that backdrop and seldom looked at it. She just knew it was there. She knew that it affected her activity, but she experienced her decisions as largely intuitive and her activity as something done in the moment. She said that more and more often, her actions and the backdrop seemed to be in harmony, but it was still sometimes a confusing position in which to be operating.

The complex and situated nature of problems was something Amanda anticipated in her original description of teacher responsibilities, but her original model seemed more orderly than the world of teaching turned out to be for her. In order to operate responsibly, she had to develop a cycle of action and reflection that became tighter and tighter until she could operate in the moment with an awareness of the "backdrop" of complications and consequences. Her understanding of her responsibility and her understanding of the moral landscape came into the same metaphor: acting on a stage in front of a backdrop she was painting herself.

Conclusion Amanda's case demonstrates the difficulties that a novice can encounter as she accepts the full responsibilities of a teacher. Amanda's perceived and actual range of choice increased as she constructed a consistent and predictable leadership role in the classroom. Her inclination to preserve relationships as she sought to resolve problems remained intact. The situated nature of her decisions presented challenges that only became more complex and difficult with experience. As Amanda faced these challenges, she realized that her program had only partially prepared her for her professional moral responsibilities, but concluded that there was no way to be prepared in advance for the infinite number of conflicts and decisions that a teacher might encounter.

Amanda's original sense of her responsibilities appeared to be complex enough to encompass the dilemmas that she faced during her student teaching. Her awareness of the social complexity of the

dilemmas she faced made her hesitant to assume a leadership role at first. During the first few weeks, she reverted to an ethos of delegation when she was under pressure. As she became more sure of her role in the classroom, her "fallback' ethos was to act unilaterally. Amanda also had to accept that sometimes teaching involved decisions that resulted in real needs being postponed or neglected, that all teachers were forced into these decisions, and that she could learn to live with her decisions as she mitigated their effects over time. Amanda's reflective process, which was lengthy and disjointed at first, became more integrated as she gained experience. In the end she described herself as acting on stage, conscious of "background" knowledge that she had constructed herself.

Discussion and Implications

Case study research has limited general applicability. However, Amanda's case raises interesting questions about the nature of professional moral activity in teaching and the nature of professional moral development. Also, teacher educators may find this case helpful in understanding certain people and situations they encounter in teaching and supervision. Further in-depth case studies may provide more knowledge of the nature of the process of professional moral development and how it varies across individuals and settings.

One of the questions raised by Amanda's case concerns the social construction of a teaching role in a particular school context. Role construction may serve a socialization function, but also may expand a person's freedom to act within that setting. In Amanda's case, constructing a role that led to respect from colleagues and children expanded her freedom to choose her own course of action. Also, until a classroom leadership role can be securely established, the novice teacher may be inhibited in her ability to allow open discourse. Even though an ethos, as defined here, is a method of operation and not a stage of moral development, it may be difficult for a teacher to operate in certain ways until she has confidence in her role as teacher. For example, Amanda may have delegated decisions to her cooperating teachers at first because she felt unsure about her ability to carry her decisions through in her particular setting. This was a reasonable doubt given the situation with Shari during group time.

Another question raised by this case concerns the way relationships and potential relationships may influence a teacher's moral activity. Preserving relationships (even at a high cost) may be a functional aspect of professional moral decision making for teachers. The data presented here indicate that a

preference for preserving relationships (over other values) may not always be an example of an "ethic of care" because there may or may not be "motivational displacement" (Noddings, 1992). Preserving relationships in the context of a teaching practice may be less "caring" (in the altruistic sense) and more pragmatic (in a Deweyan sense), because preserving relationships opens possibilities for resolution of complex, personal, and messy problems.

Another question raised by Amanda's case concerns the role of reflection in teachers' moral decision making. The rapid and public nature of most decisions constrained Amanda's deliberation at the time she made the decision and sometimes she could not think of an acceptable solution to a problem under duress. If Amanda felt uncomfortable about something at the end of the day, she "replayed" troublesome scenarios and generated alternative actions she could have taken. This process expanded Amanda's understanding of what her freedom to act had been in that particular situation, even if she could not revisit the problem but had to "make peace with it." If an individual does not see that a choice can be made, there is no moral component to the action (Dewey, 1922). Therefore, deliberating about choices, even after the fact, served to expand Amanda's sense of her moral responsibility in particular actions. Over time, Amanda described making use of this information in a sort of oblique way. It was something she was aware of being behind her, the background hanging behind the stage on which she acted.

One of the main educational implications is that by the time preservice teachers begin their student teaching, they may have strong beliefs about the responsibilities of teachers and how they will fulfill them. Some of these beliefs may be intuitive or barely conscious, formed in their past experiences in and out of their teacher preparation program. However, Amanda was able to articulate a framework that described her view of the responsibilities of teachers, and that framework was actually something she used as she attempted to operate in her new setting. Like Amanda, preservice teachers with well-developed beliefs about professional responsibility still may not realize what complications are inherent in those beliefs. Teacher educators need to help preservice teachers become more aware of their own beliefs and how they might be implemented.

The habit of preserving relationships first, which Amanda apparently formed in her field experiences and/or childcare work, remained stable throughout the eight weeks of student teaching studied here. What preservice teachers practice may later emerge in new settings and be ultimately formalized in

mental structures. When preservice teachers are in their field experiences, they need guidance in the moral aspects, as well as the effectiveness aspects of their work. However, the discussions of professional ethics and hypothetical case work may have played a role in sensitizing Amanda to dilemmas and promoting reflection. Amanda mentioned these discussions several times and referred to items in the Ethical Code of Conduct (Feeney & Freeman, 1999). Teacher education programs need both kinds of moral education for teachers.

Amanda's teacher preparation program sensitized her to possible ethical dilemmas. She had developed productive habits during her fieldwork and other experiences with children and families. Still, Amanda did not feel prepared for the pace and emotional aspects of the decisions she would have to make. We also saw that Amanda's method of operation varied as she developed confidence in herself as a teacher and constructed a role for herself in her new setting. Amanda's struggles suggest that the social and emotional development of preservice teachers may be an important aspect of their preparation to teach. Teacher educators may want to consider ways to foster social and emotional growth into their preparation programs.

Understanding how Amanda's operation in the classroom can be classified in Oser's framework doesn't completely explain how she operated or why. Essentially, Amanda learned to hold competing responsibilities in balance. For Amanda this usually meant that she held one responsibility in abeyance while she attended to another. For example, she was able to take a firmer hand during group times when she decided, "There's me time and there's group time." At least for Amanda, the process of framing and solving moral problems in practice appeared to be a complex entanglement of her prior understanding of professional responsibility, an emerging understanding of the social context, and the ability to operate in a patchwork of freedom and constraint in a real classroom.

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